# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 2016-2018

*September 2016*

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FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 2016-2018

Executive Summary

FLORIDA'S CIVIC CHALLENGE. Something unusual happened in Florida in 2015. Because of strong regional differences, bringing people together in the Sunshine state has proven very difficult. Yet, last year over 30 organizations joined hands to create the Florida Civic Advance (FCA), a network dedicated to strengthen civic practices in Florida communities. A spark for this action was concern about recent research rating Florida near last among both states and large metropolitan areas in regard to “civic health.” These findings make clear that Florida lags the nation significantly in engaging citizens, and that this problem is particularly severe in the state’s large and growing urban areas. These conditions, combined with the growth of incivility, social divisions, and political polarization, have led to the formation of the Florida Civic Advance. The Florida Civic Advance is very much about Florida’s future. It is about moving beyond widespread disengagement and division to build stronger communities and a better quality of life for all.

WHAT IS CIVIC ADVANCE? FCA leaders agreed that civic refers to the variety of things done by citizens, government, and other private and non-profit institutions that make democracy and our communities work. What does it take to advance such ideals in communities today? For Florida, FCA leaders identified the following 8 areas:

1. Voter Education & Participation, Community Information, Education, & Deliberation
2. Citizen Engagement with Government & Community Visioning and Planning
3. Collaborative Economic Development & Multi-Sector Partnering
4. Volunteering and Charitable Giving
5. Nonprofit Sector Leadership
6. Intergroup and Intergenerational Connecting
7. Civic Education and Student Service Learning
8. Civility, Neighborliness, Community Caring & Inclusive Community Experiences

While few communities do all of these things well, each area is an important part of the civic fabric and infrastructure needed for a community to function well. The purpose of the FCA is to encourage and support communities who would advance and seek improvements in these areas in order to unite together to achieve strong, quality and healthy communities in Florida.

FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE GOALS. The FCA has three inter-related goals that are as follows:

• To Build Public Support and Achieve Civic Advance: The FCA is about a powerful idea and ideal – citizen participation. Today, this ideal represents an antidote and challenge to civic divisiveness and disengagement. Working through many partners, the FCA seeks to inform the public of the many benefits from building social capital within a community through civic activities. At the same time, it aims to inform and inspire with stories about civic innovations and success from throughout Florida and beyond.

• To Encourage Action by Local Officials and Civic Leaders: The FCA seeks to assist local officials and civic leaders as they attend to the civic health of their communities and how to improve it. This involves providing good examples of cross-sector successful civic improvements and innovations in various types of communities, help in planning or implementation when requested, and collaboration with local officials and civic leaders and their organizations interested in using planning tools such as civic mapping and civic indicators.

• To Support Civic Innovation and Entrepreneurs: A bottom-line outcome sought by the FCA is the creation of widespread civic innovation in Florida communities through encouragement and support for civic entrepreneurs who would create new civic ventures as well as civic “intrapreneurs” who seek innovative changes within existing institutions. This involves a strong commitment to leadership training and local assistance, especially working with and through many FCA network organizations.
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2016 – 2018. To help achieve it’s goals in the next several years, the path of action for the Florida Civic Advance is directed toward the following:

1. **Build a Florida Civic Information Network:** Obtain, analyze, and communicate information about civic challenges, innovation and success through an information network including a web platform and communication strategies on civic advance and innovation with the general public, with local officials, and with community groups and leaders.

2. **Connect to the Issues that Matter Most:** While every Florida community faces its own unique set of policy challenges, there are many issues that are widespread among the cities and counties of the Sunshine State. FCA is about empowering communities across the state to identify and assess those issues which they want to address through improving civic capacity.

3. **Increase Knowledge About Civic Strategies and Activities:** To foster civic improvement going forward, it is important to learn more about civic practices and the things that make them more or less successful in Florida communities. A Florida Civic Research Agenda will be created and that it will encourage greater effort, focus, collaboration, and support for advancing knowledge about civic practice. Beginning in the second half of 2016, and in succeeding years, work groups will be established to identify knowledge needs and action research opportunities in the FCA civic activity areas. Efforts will be made to organize work groups in the following areas initially: Citizen Engagement with Government including Visioning & Planning; Volunteering and Charitable Giving; Intergroup/Intergenerational Connections; and Collaborative Economic Development and Multi-Sector Partnerships.

4. **Create Tools and Programs to Support Civic Innovation in Florida Communities:** To encourage civic improvement and innovation in Florida communities, the FCA seeks many avenues to provide assistance. The FCA intends to create a variety of learning opportunities for community leaders and to promote the creation of tools to help them such as civic metrics to assess many areas of civic practice at the community level.

5. **Strengthen the Organizational Capacity of the Florida Civic Advance:** The FCA is a unique undertaking that is part movement, network, and organization. The organizational architecture of the FCA is still in construction, but it is not unknown. It most clearly resembles that of a collective impact model in which organizations join together to make greater progress through collaboration in addressing a difficult social problem than they can in isolation. The FCA understands that the success of such enterprise depends on achieving such things as a common vision and agenda, shared metrics, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization.

**Implementing the Plan.** Looking forward, the core organizational agenda of the FCA is to continue to make progress in each of these areas. Beyond this, emphasis will include two additional things:

1. **Expand the Network.** One is to expand the network of FCA partners to include faith-based community service institutions, more business associations, and community-based funding institutions.

2. **Create a Sustainable Financial Base.** The other is to create a sustainable financial base that can expand over time, remain dependable, and respond to civic challenges and opportunities to make Florida a world-class leader in civic advance and innovation. Until now, both direct and in-kind support for the FCA has come from the Florida Consensus Center, the Allegheny Franciscan Ministries, AARP Florida, Federal Reserve of Atlanta, Plum Creek, Sabadell United Bank, Dr. Stuart Langton & UCF Institute of Government.

Once this strategic plan has been agreed to by the FCA Coordinating Council and vetted with the FCA Network Members, fund raising will be undertaken for the next stage of FCA development. Currently, the work of the FCA is managed by the FCRC Consensus Center. The Center, which is based at Florida State University, serves as the Secretariat, and is assisted by a 19 member Coordinating Council of FCA network members who serve as a planning and policy group. The Council will review and revise this strategic plan, will establish timelines for activities, assist in designing plans and helping to obtain future financial support, and develop organizational plans for the future of the Florida Civic Advance.
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 2016-18

September 2016

I. FLORIDA’S CIVIC CHALLENGE

Something unusual happened in Florida in 2015. Because of strong regional differences, bringing people together in the Sunshine state has proven very difficult. Yet, last year over 30 organizations joined hands to create the Florida Civic Advance (FCA), a network dedicated to strengthen civic practices in Florida communities. A spark for this action was concern about recent research rating Florida near last among both states and large metropolitan areas in regard to “civic health.” For example, it was reported that:

- Florida ranked 50th among the 50 states in terms of “working with neighbors to fix a community problem, 46th among states in people volunteering, 47th in and attending public meetings, 46th in charitable giving, 40th in helping neighbors, and 36nd in voter turnout.
- In overall civic health in the 50 largest U.S. cities, Miami ranked last, Orlando was 48th, and Jacksonville and Tampa tied at 47th.
- A study of young Floridians (those 18 to 29) concluded them to be: “the most disengaged group in one of the most civically disengaged states.”

These findings provide a wake-up call about Florida’s deep civic challenges. They make clear that Florida lags the nation significantly in engaging citizens, that this problem is particularly severe in the state’s large and growing urban areas, and that Florida’s young adults seem unlikely to reverse this situation. These conditions, combined with the growth of incivility, social divisions, and political polarization, have led to the formation of the Florida Civic Advance.

Certainly, Florida’s civic challenges are not unique among states - they are just more intense and complex. And the FCA is not alone in its concerns as it is a reflection of a widespread movement for civic renewal in America. However, because Florida is a young state driven by population growth, our civic challenge is not just to renew things that were, but, as important, to create things that have never been.

So, the Florida Civic Advance is very much about Florida’s future. It is about moving beyond widespread disengagement and division to build stronger communities and a better quality of life for all. As the Florida Chamber Foundation has said in regard to Florida’s future: “Citizen’s engaged in their communities are vital, not just because engagement fosters trust in public
institutions and legitimacy in public processes, but also because it is correlated to a strong educational system, a competitive workforce, and a dynamic economy.”

II. WHAT IS CIVIC ADVANCE?

Since the term civic suggests different things to different people, FCA leaders agreed that civic refers to the variety of things done by citizens, government, and other institutions that make democracy work. Civic is important because it includes principles and practices essential to our political and social life. As for American communities, civic ideals inspire us with expectations that citizens and institutions should be engaged; they care for one another and the quality of community life; government is just, proactive, inclusive, and transparent; collaboration among public, private, and community leaders and institutions is regular; and opportunities are created for connections between diverse elements of the community. What does it take to advance such ideals in communities today? For Florida, FCA leaders identified the following 8 areas:

1. Voter Education & Participation, Community Information, Education, & Deliberation
2. Citizen Engagement with Government & Community Visioning and Planning
3. Collaborative Economic Development & Multi-Sector Partnering
4. Volunteering and Charitable Giving
5. Nonprofit Sector Leadership
6. Intergroup and Intergenerational Connecting
7. Civic Education and Student Service Learning
8. Civility, Neighborliness, Community Caring & Inclusive Community Experiences

While few communities do all of these things well, each area is an important part of the civic fabric and infrastructure needed for a community to function well. The purpose of the FCA is to encourage and support communities who would advance and seek improvements in these areas in order to unite together to achieve strong, quality and healthy communities in Florida.

III. FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE GOALS

The FCA has three inter-related goals that are as follows:

A. To Build Public Support: The FCA is about a powerful idea – citizen participation. The idea that citizens can and should participate in their government and in community life is central to the laws of our nation and our notion of citizenship. In this sense, citizen participation is an idea that is also an ideal. Today, this ideal represents an antidote and challenge to civic divisiveness and disengagement. One of the goals of the FCA, therefore, is to be an advocate for more and better citizen participation in Florida communities in order to achieve civic advance.

Public appreciation of the benefits of citizen participation is a prerequisite for attracting greater individual and institutional engagement in our communities. So, working through many partners, the FCA seeks to inform the public of the many benefits from building social capital within a community through civic activities. At the same time, it aims to
inform and inspire with stories about civic innovations and success from throughout Florida and beyond.

B. To Encourage Action by Local Officials and Civic Leaders: The second goal of the FCA is to assist local officials and civic leaders as they attend to the civic health of their communities and how to improve it. This involves such things as providing good examples of cross-sector successful civic improvements and innovations in various types of communities, help in planning or implementation when requested, and collaboration with local officials and civic leaders who are interested in using planning tools such as civic mapping and civic indicators. As appropriate, the FCA will encourage collaboration and mutual assistance among communities to strengthen various areas of civic improvement as well as in using civic engagement strategies to address difficult public challenges.

C. To Support Civic Innovation and Entrepreneurs: A bottom-line outcome sought by the FCA is the creation of widespread civic innovation in Florida communities. To that end, the FCA encourages and supports civic entrepreneurs who would create new civic ventures as well as civic “intrapreneurs” who seek innovative changes within existing institutions. This involves a strong commitment to leadership training and local assistance, especially working with and through many FCA network organizations.

IV. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2016 – 2018

A. Strategic Directions Path of Action

To help achieve it’s goals in the next several years, the path of action for the Florida Civic Advance is directed toward the following:

1. Build a Florida Civic Information Network: At the heart of what the FCA seeks to achieve is the ability to obtain, analyze, and communicate information about civic challenges and success. This requires building a network to share information about civic best practices and innovation from throughout Florida, who is doing what in civic advance, research findings, leader and project profiles, et. al. (See Appendix 2, Florida Civic Information Network Concept Paper, June 2016)

Many FCA partners, and other interested parties, will collaborate in constructing and maintaining the information network. Partners in higher education will provide profiles, analysis, and case studies. A web platform will be built and maintained as a core communication medium. Singular communication strategies will be designed to communicate with the general public, with local officials, and with community groups and leaders interested in civic innovation.

2. Connect to the Issues that Matter Most: While every Florida community faces its own unique set of policy challenges, there are many issues that are widespread among the cities and counties of the Sunshine State. FCA is about empowering communities across the state to identify and assess those issues which they want to address through improving civic capacity. These issues include such matters as sustainably managing growth and development, education, poverty and wage stagnation, public safety, environmental protection, and intergroup relations.
The FCA is committed to advance civic approaches to engaging on such issues through several initiatives:

- The FCA will report on successful examples of civic engagement and innovation that address widely shared challenging policy issues in Florida communities;
- FCA will organize, facilitate, and undertake demonstration projects (with and through partner teams) to effectively engage citizens, government, business, and community and civic institutions in addressing the most critical of these policy issues; and
- The FCA will organize self-help and learning opportunities for interested government officials and community and civic leaders to increase their knowledge and skills to engage citizens and build civic partnerships that can take action on policy issues of widespread concern

3. **Increase Knowledge About Civic Strategies and Activities:** To foster civic improvement going forward, it is important to learn more about civic practices and the things that make them more or less successful in Florida communities. As a foundation for creating such practical knowledge, the FCA seeks to identify the most important questions that need to be addressed in each area of civic practice. It is intended that, based on these questions, a Florida Civic Research Agenda will be created and that it will encourage greater effort, focus, collaboration, and support for advancing knowledge about civic practice.

Beginning in the second half of 2016, and in succeeding years, work groups will be established to identify knowledge needs and action research opportunities in the FCA civic activity areas. Work groups will be created based on the interest and commitment of FCA network members. Efforts will be made to organize work groups in the following areas initially: Citizen Engagement with Government including Visioning & Planning; Volunteering and Charitable Giving; Intergroup/Intergenerational Connections; and Collaborative Economic Development and Multi-Sector Partnerships.

4. **Create Tools and Programs to Support Civic Innovation in Florida Communities:** To encourage civic improvement and innovation in Florida communities, the FCA seeks many avenues to provide assistance. This reflects a philosophy of community development that eschews one-size-fits-all improvement models, and which instead seeks to build with and upon community interest. Currently, work is being undertaken in Miami to explore options for civic advance, and it is hoped that Miami leaders will create successful strategies and activities that may be helpful to share with other urban communities in the future.

The main pathway in support of civic advance is to provide relevant and timely information on an ongoing basis. Beyond this, the FCA intends to create a variety of learning opportunities for community leaders and to promote the creation of tools to help them. One such tool, which is being developed by several FCA partners, includes a variety of metrics to assess many areas of civic practice at the community level. More information about these metrics is expected in late 2016.
5. **Strengthen the Organizational Capacity of the Florida Civic Advance**: The FCA is a unique undertaking that is part movement, network, and organization. Assuring the best balance between these elements is critical, and this strategic statement seeks to serve that need for now. While highly aspirational, the FCA expects that progress will not be linear. So, much will depend upon learning from experience, taking advantage of opportunities, being adaptive, remaining persistent, and attracting support and funding from others.

The organizational architecture of the FCA is still in construction, but it is not unknown. It most clearly resembles that of a collective impact model in which organizations join together to make greater progress through collaboration in addressing a difficult social problem than they can in isolation. The FCA understands that the success of such enterprise depends on achieving such things as a common vision and agenda, shared metrics, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization.

**B. Implementing the Plan**

Looking forward, the core organizational agenda of the FCA is to continue to make progress in each of these areas. Beyond this, emphasis will include two additional things:

1. **Expand the Network.** One is to expand the network of FCA partners to include faith-based community service institutions, more business associations, and community-based funding institutions.

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The Council will review and revise this strategic plan, will establish timelines for activities, assist in designing plans and helping to obtain future financial support, and develop organizational plans for the future of the Florida Civic Advance.
Appendix #1

FCA COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBERS

1. Stuart Langton, Chair, FCRC Consensus Center, Senior Fellow
2. Stacy Carlson, Florida Philanthropic Network
3. Susan Boyer, Florida Benchmarking Consortium
4. Tony Carvajal, Florida Chamber Foundation
5. Marilyn Crotty, Institute of Government, University of Central Florida
6. Bryan Desloge, National Association of Counties
7. Doug Dobson, Frey Institute for Politics, University of Central Florida
8. Ava Erde, Florida Library Association
9. Todd Greene, Federal Reserve, Atlanta
10. Earle Klay, Askew School of Public Administration & Policy, Florida State University
11. Dee Dee Rasmussen, Florida Campus Compact
12. Jeff Johnson AARP Florida
13. Jim Murley, Miami Dade County
14. Scott Paine, Florida League of Cities
15. Randy Reid, International City County Managers Association & University of Florida Bob Graham Center
16. Suzanne Richards, Corporation for National and Community Service
17. Linda Shelley, Co-Chair FCRC Consensus Center Leadership Council
18. Chester Spellman, Volunteer Florida
19. Wendy Walker, Leadership Florida
Appendix #2

FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE INITIAL SUPPORTERS AND SPONSORS

Thanks to the Following Florida Civic Advance Supporters and Sponsors:

Dr. Stuart Langton has provided generous underwriting support for student scholarships to the FCA 2015 Summit.
## Appendix #3

### Florida Civic Advance Network Organizations

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<th>1. AARP Florida</th>
<th>22. Florida Library Association</th>
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<td>2. Allegany Franciscan Ministries</td>
<td>23. Florida Local Government Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The Askew School of Public Administration, Florida State University</td>
<td>24. Florida Philanthropic Network</td>
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<td>4. American Planning Association, Florida Chapter</td>
<td>25. Florida Non Profit Alliance</td>
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<td>5. Big Bend Minority Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>26. Florida Public Television Association</td>
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<td>6. Broward College</td>
<td>27. Florida Regional Councils Association</td>
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<td>7. Catalyst Miami</td>
<td>28. Florida Tax Watch, Florida Citizenship Center</td>
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<td>8. The Children's Trust</td>
<td>29. Florida Trend</td>
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<td>9. Corporation for National &amp; Community Services - Florida</td>
<td>30. Lou Frey Institute of Government and Politics, University of Central Florida</td>
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<td>10. FCRC Consensus Center, Florida State University</td>
<td>31. Bob Graham Center for Public Service, University of Florida</td>
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<td>11. Federal Reserve Bank, Atlanta</td>
<td>32. The Good Government Institute, University of Miami</td>
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<td>12. Florida Association of Counties</td>
<td>33. Institute for Food &amp; Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida</td>
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<td>13. Florida Benchmarking Consortium</td>
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<td>14. Florida Campus Compact</td>
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<td>15. Florida Chamber Foundation</td>
<td>36. Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions, St. Petersburg College,</td>
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<td>16. Florida Children’s Council</td>
<td>37. Tallahassee Community College</td>
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<td>17. Florida City County Management Association</td>
<td>38. Center for Public and Non Profit Management, University of Central Florida</td>
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<td>18. Florida Geographic Alliance</td>
<td>39. Village Square, Tallahassee, St. Petersburg &amp; Broward County’</td>
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<td>19. Florida Governor's Office on Indian Affairs</td>
<td>40. Volunteer Florida</td>
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<td>20. Florida Immigrant Coalition</td>
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